

THE PROFILE OF GENDER EQUALITY ISSUE ATTENTION IN WESTERN EUROPE

Claire Annesley (University of Sussex, UK)

Isabelle Engeli (University of Ottawa, Canada)

Francesca Gains (University of Manchester, UK)

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the factors which drive governments to pay attention to gender equality issues and place them upon executive agendas. In line with studies of the dynamics of issue attention, which demonstrate the importance of investigating variability in the attention policy makers give to issue demands across policy domains, this article argues that policy issues related to gender equality are multi dimensional and patterns in executive attention vary across the different types of gender issues. Multidimensionality of gender equality issues reflects different dynamics in agenda setting as different issues invoke contrasting constellations of political representation, institutional friction and veto points. To investigate this variation, this article proposes a two-fold distinction between Class based and Status based gender equality issues and assesses the validity of three sets of explanations for when gender issues succeed in reaching executive agendas: women in politics, party ideology and economic performance. Drawing on governmental attention datasets from the Comparative Agendas Project we conduct a systematic comparative quantitative analysis of the determinants of gender equality issue attention in five Western European countries. The main findings confirm that the mechanisms through which different types of gender equality issues gain executive attention differ according to the kind of the gender equality demand. Costly class based gender equality issues are more likely to receive executive attention when the economy is performing well, when there is a strong presence of Social Democrats and when there is a high proportion of female MPs. In contrast, economic performance, party politics and women's parliamentary presence do not seem to exert any impact on status based issues. Instead, critical actors in the government seem to be the strongest driver for attention over this second type of gender equality issue. This study contributes a gendered dimension to the policy agendas scholarship, adding theoretical and empirical depth to the understanding of how non-core issues secure their

place on full governmental agendas. By focusing on how to secure governmental attention for gender equality issues, we make a major contribution to understanding the initial genesis of gender equality policies.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s and the mobilization of second wave feminism, gender equality has attracted growing attention from governments across Western Europe. An increasing range of issues relating to gender equality have found their way onto governmental agendas (Mazur 2002; Mazur and Pollack 2009). However there is immense variation in the extent to which pressure to promote gender equality has successfully secured executive attention. For instance, reproductive rights made it onto the agenda in some countries at an early stage, while equality at work proved more successful in getting faster executive attention in other countries. This variation presents an analytical and empirical puzzle for comparative policy studies and politics and gender scholarship.

This article tackles the puzzle of varying patterns of issue attention by investigating under which conditions and for which reasons some issues related to gender are successful in reaching the executive agenda compared with others. The aim is to elucidate why, how and under what conditions different types of gender equality issues are likely to gain the attention of executives. In line with recent scholarship (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Baumgartner, et al, 2011; Jennings and al. 2011; Mortensen et al. 2011) we refer to this as *issue attention* for gender equality. While the links between public opinion, government responsiveness and policy action are multifaceted (Bara 2006; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010; Soroka and Wlezien 2010), a policy issue is deemed to have secured the attention of the executive when it is politically emphasized and publicized as a priority a government wishes to address (Bevan and Jennings 2014). Executive agendas are dominated by core policy issues, making it hard for new and non-core issues like gender equality to break through. In examining gender

equality issue attention we are therefore examining the difficult first, but crucial, step towards the possibility of gender equality policy change, a focus which has been absent from both the gender equality and agenda setting scholarship.

Section 1 argues that gender equality is multidimensional, comprising different kinds of policy issues that respond to differentiated attention dynamics, advocacy and institutional friction (May et al. 2006). We start with a distinction between two main types of gender equality issues, or domains, that could be awarded executive attention: class based issues and women's status based issues (Htun and Weldon 2010; Mazur 2002). We elaborate this conceptualization further and argue that these two main types of issues should be broken in two additional sub-sets that reflect different agenda setting dynamics and invoke varied constellations of political representation, friction and veto points (Green-Pedersen 2007; Green-Pedersen and Wilkerson 2006).

Section 2 proposes three main explanations in accounting for heightened executive attention for these different types of gender equality issues: women in power; party ideology / partisanship; and economic performance. To investigate the mechanisms through which gender equality issues reach executive agendas in five Western European democracies (Denmark, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom), our analysis draws on new and comprehensive datasets of executive policy attention across over 200 policy issue classification over the last 30 years generated by the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP; Baumgartner et al. 2011). Section 3 discusses the data and the operationalization of the two types of gender policy issues.

Section 4 presents our main research findings and shows that class based issues, which have financial and redistributive implications, mostly secure executive attention when the economy is performing well. The more moderate support of a strong presence of women and Social Democrats in parliament highlights the need to distinguish between women's economic integration and rebalancing gender roles in caring and work activities. These are two different sub-sets of class based issues and respond to differentiated political

pressures. For status based issues, in contrast, economic performance and party politics are not significant, but women's ministerial presence is. This improved understanding of the dynamics of gender equality issue attention takes forward the comparative literature on gender equality policy analysis by elaborating the range of issues at the crucial agenda setting stage. The analysis also contributes significantly to the agenda setting literature, broadening the understanding of policy responsiveness and the determinants of issue attention for new or non-core policy issues. We show that policies need to be clearly differentiated according to the representation and resources required to implement them.

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL PROFILE OF GENDER EQUALITY ISSUE ATTENTION

Our research explains patterns of issue attention for different types of gender equality issues. While many studies of gender equality focus on single issues (for example, gender equality in the welfare state, women's political representation, or the promotion of reproductive rights) in this article we make a strong case for conceiving of gender equality as multidimensional, encompassing a broad range of issues. We argue that this differentiation between types of policy demand is fundamental to account fully for the heterogeneity of gender equality issues seeking to gain political attention. These distinctions alter the determinants and dynamics of the process of attention for gender equality issues in a national or regional setting as the type of issue determines which actors are involved, how effectively they can press for change, and the degree of friction they face (Baumgartner et al. 2011).

The determinants and dynamics of gender policy change is one addressed by the maturing field of comparative gender equality policy analysis which seeks to address the questions of how, why and to what end states address women's rights and gender equality (Mazur and Pollack 2009; Mazur 2002; Htun and Weldon 2012). Htun and Weldon's study (2010) proposes to distinguish between status policies and class based policies. Status policies (for example reproductive rights) seek to address the subordinate position of women as a group while class based policies (for example publicly funded childcare)

address the unfair gendered division of paid and unpaid work and primarily benefit poorer women. Flagging issue distinctiveness in this way helps the recognition that each gender equality issue ‘involves a distinct set of actors, activates different cleavages and conflicts and has distinct implications for gender relations’ (Htun and Weldon, 2010, 208). So, for example, welfare policies to promote women’s access to employment might be more likely to reach the government agenda in countries with a strong social democratic tradition or in countries where a large number of women have access to the resources associated with government office (Annesley and Gains 2012).

The distinctive contribution of our research is in taking a public policy lens to understanding gender policy dynamics in highlighting the domain specific aspects of political representation and policy processes at the agenda setting stage. To understand the multidimensional dynamics of gender equality issue attention we develop domain sensitive explanations for the determinants of issue attention for gender equality (Figure 1 below). In the class dimension we include gender equality issues which are costly and redistributive in their effect. We develop Htun and Weldon’s conceptualization (2010) and demonstrate the need for further distinguishing between women’s economic integration and balancing gender roles in caring and work activities. These are two different sub-sets of class based issues which respond to different pressures. In the status dimension we include gender equality issues which address the status of women as a group such as issues affecting women’s bodily integrity or women’s political or legal rights and might have a doctrinal dimension to them. Here as well, we distinguish between status issues that address the abstract principle of gender equality and, as such, are more likely to receive some broad support cutting across political ideology and status issues that polarize public opinion and political parties such as abortion and same-sex marriage. Blueprint issues (Mazur 2002) are overarching commitments to the general principle of gender equality such as the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty in the UK in 2007 that requires all public institutions to promote gender equality issues in their policy deliberations and service provisions. In contrast abortion, same-sex marriage or

teenagers' access to contraception are likelier to provoke public debate and trigger resistance.

Figure 1 about here

THE DETERMINANTS OF GENDER EQUALITY ISSUE ATTENTION

Having established the multidimensionality of gender equality issues, we develop a range of determinants that might explain the circumstances under which different types of gender equality claims secure governmental attention. To do this we draw on several literatures - comparative welfare states, gender and political representation and state feminism - and synthesize these insights with explanations to develop a set of testable hypotheses around the themes of women in power, party ideology and strategies, as well as economic determinants.

Women in Power

The primary focus of the gender and representation and state feminism literature is on mechanisms through which feminist interests can be mobilized for pressure for change, through social movements, representation in legislatures, presence in governments, and the establishment of women's policy agencies (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Weldon, 2002; Lovenduski, 2005, McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995; McBride and Mazur 2012; Dahlerup, 2006; Childs and Krook, 2008; Celis, 2008; Atchison and Down, 2009; Htun and Weldon, 2012). Empirical work in this tradition has been predominantly qualitative with case studies across a full range of gender equality policy areas such as abortion, prostitution, political representation, job training, and 'hot issues' of the 1990s (for a review see Mazur and Pollack 2009). This body of research presents some rich but divergent findings; determinants on gendering policy change seem to greatly vary across sectors and time periods. Recent studies have point out at the contribution of large-N quantitative analysis for systematic investigation of gendering government attention and action (for instance Htun and Weldon, 2010; 2012; Annesley et al. 2014).

What these literatures have in common is that they foreground the presence and agency of women as the key determinant of gender equality mobilization and change across a broad range of policy domains. The theory of substantive representation of women proposes the contested notion that female parliamentarians will not only represent, but also act for women and, by so doing, make a difference to women's lives (Lovenduski, 2005). The substantive representation of women literature recently emphasizes that women acting alone as 'critical actors' might be able to make significant progress towards gender equality (Childs and Krook 2008) and that men can be important allies to feminist politicians seeking change (Annesley 2010). Whilst we recognize it cannot be guaranteed that all women parliamentarians will act for women, we argue that increasing their numbers overall improves the likelihood that some women legislators will act for women (Stokes, 2005, 20). Accordingly, we hypothesize that *increasing female representation in parliament will incentivize governments to dedicate more attention to all types of gender equality issues*.

Studying women in parliament has been the dominant approach for scholars studying the capacity of women to shape policy. However, Celis et al (2008, 104) highlight the need for the focus to shift away from women in parliament to include other institutional sites and critical actors, who might be 'male and female legislators, ministers, party members, bureaucrats and members of civil society groups'. Annesley and Gains (2010) make the case that to accurately assess the agenda setting capacity of women in politics it is necessary to be clear about which institutional settings wield political resources in a given political system. In parliamentary democracies, political resources for agenda setting are increasingly controlled by the government so it is executive actors rather than legislators who determine the policy agenda (Jennings et al. 2011; Mortensen and Green-Pedersen 2012). However, ministers intent on reducing gender inequalities experience resistance to agenda setting opportunities and frequently do not have adequate access to executive resources to shape the agenda (Annesley and Gains, 2012). The state feminism literature adds the significant insight that ministerial resources for gender equality agenda setting

are strengthened when a minister's work is supported by a dedicated and effective bureaucratic unit such as a women's policy agency (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995; McBride and Mazur 2012). Therefore, we hypothesize that *a higher female presence in government will result in more attention being dedicated to all types of gender equality issues*. In addition, we also hypothesize that *executive attention will be more sustained in the presence of a women's policy agency*.

Party Ideology and Partisanship in Politics

The comparative politics and comparative welfare states literatures place emphasis on party ideology as the key determinant to explain the differential adoption of welfare policies to promote gender equality in the home and at work (Sainsbury, 1999; Huber and Stephens, 2000; Walby, 2004; Lewis, 2006; Kittilson, 2008; Morgan, 2009; Bonoli, and Reber, 2010; Bolzendahl, 2011). Specifically Social Democracy conceptualizes gender equality as an integral part of an overarching political program to reduce class based inequality and promote equal citizenship (Htun and Weldon 2010, McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995). Thus gender equality measures to promote women's economic independence and a fairer distribution of the sexual division of labor is more likely to be advocated by social democratic politics.

Empirically progress towards class based gender equality can be seen in western democracies where Social Democratic parties have governed (Annesley et al. 2014; Bonoli and Reber, 2010; Morgan, 2009). Obvious examples are Sweden, Norway, and Finland since the 1970s, where social democratic politics has led to welfare states featuring high levels of quality paid work for women, a good provision of public childcare, and parental leave schemes where care is shared between both parents. Even in the UK, centre left New Labour governments (1997-2010) improved the financial circumstances of, and support provided to, working women (Annesley, Gains and Rummery 2007). In short, class based gender equality policies focusing on improving

women's financial independence and a better work-care balance are associated with left-wing parties.

In contrast, most gender equality issues related to status have, we argue, no strong ideological associations. For instance, gender violence is not easily integrated into party competition dynamics and is more likely to garner cross-party support (or rejection) from women and men alike across the political spectrum than is the introduction of paternity leave as complementary to maternity leave (Engeli et al. 2012; Green-Pedersen and Wilkerson 2006). As a result, we hypothesize that *class based gender equality issues will be more likely to emerge on government agendas when Social Democrats are strong in the parliament while women's status issues will remain unaffected.*

Economic Determinants

A final explanation for the emergence of different kinds of gender equality issue attention relates to economic factors. The impact of economic performance on gender equality advocates' chances of gaining policy attention has been so far under-researched (Annesley and Gains, 2012; Annesley et al. 2014). The comparative welfare state literature highlights the relevance of socio-economic development in determining gender equality outcomes while public policy literature highlights the importance of public opinion about the economy in determining public policy (Jennings et al, 2011).

We argue that some types of gender equality issues incur higher costs and have stronger redistributive implications than others. Specifically, bringing class based gender equality issues onto the governmental agenda potentially affects the established formula of redistribution in economic decision making and invariably requires more governmental resources. The potential costs of class based gender equality policies can fall on the state, employers and employees in formal and/or informal work. Governmental costs can arise from transfer payments through social security, state-funded childcare or parental leave policies. Policy implementation might lead to compliance and implementation costs of policy reform and oversight for example the start up and running costs of regulation

agencies, the costs of supporting legislative challenge, the costs of directly administering and advising employers on compliance. Employers may face costs from equal pay legislation, from benefit costs such as maternity pay or indirectly from administrative costs. For male employees there are the perceived costs of their displacement by female employees, and the frequently detrimental financial impact of undertaking informal unpaid caring work. Therefore, for gender equality issues with fiscally redistributive consequences it is important to consider and understand the economic determinants of securing governmental attention. In contrast, there is no clear evidence or reason to propose that economic performance affects the propensity of governments to adopt gender status issues onto their policy agendas. Instead, introducing status issues (e.g. relating to abortion, prostitution, rape and domestic violence) could be regarded as a relatively low cost way of making progress on gender equality. As Wilson (2007) points out in her analysis of the development of LGBT rights in the UK under New Labour, promoting the rights of lesbian women, was a cost neutral advancement in gender equality policy.

In sum, it is our argument that advocates of class based gender equality issues will face economic constraints on their agenda setting activity because of the potentially large redistributive consequences. As Kingdon suggests, officials note changing public moods when it comes to the economy; they act on this information to promote or downgrade possible issue agendas (Kingdon 1995). Advocates of class based gender equality issues will, we argue, find it easier to get gender equality issues on government agendas when economic circumstances are favorable. Advocates of issues relating to status will not experience such fiscal constraints. Drawing on these debates, we hypothesize that *class based gender equality issues will be more likely to reach the government agenda when the economy is performing well while the level of attention toward gender equality issues related to women's status will remain unaffected by economic performance.*

DATA AND METHODS

To investigate patterns in gendering executive attention across different types of gender equality issues, we draw on the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) datasets on executive attention at the national level. The CAP data relies on a common policy issue-classification of executive attention across political systems. The CAP datasets, thus, allows for comprehensive and reliable comparative measure of publicly stated executive agendas across issues, countries and venues (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Breeman et al. 2009; Baumgartner et al. 2011; Bevan et al. 2011; Jennings et al. 2010; Mortensen et al. 2011).

Executives Speeches

The executive agendas investigated here are the annual statements of policy priorities and commitments in executive speeches in Denmark, The Netherlands, The United Kingdom, Switzerland and Spain. Our time period goes from 1961 to 2007 for the first four countries, and from 1982 to 2007 in the case of Spain. The agendas are: the Queen's Speech for the UK¹ (Jennings et al. 2011) and the Netherlands (Breeman et al. 2009), the so-called "messages" from the Swiss government² (Varone et al. 2014), the Prime Minister's annual addresses to the Parliament in Denmark (Green-Pedersen 2007) and the

¹ More generally known as the Speech from the Throne or as the King's Speech during the reign of a male monarch. UK Data Archives at Essex: SN 6974 - Legislative Policy Agendas in the United Kingdom, 1910-2010.

² Output of the project Agenda Setting in Switzerland funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (ref. 105511-119245/1).

State of the Union debates and investiture speeches in Spain (Chaqués and Palau 2011).³

The comparative strategy applied here is neither a most-similar nor a most-different systems strategy *stricto sensu*. It is rather an availability-based selection of countries which aims at maximizing variation on the dependent variable as well as on the three main explanatory factors across time and countries: women's representation, party politics, and economic performance.

The speeches - addressed by the titular Head of the State in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom and by the prime minister in Denmark and Spain - state the forthcoming executive priorities and concerns for the forthcoming parliamentary session. The messages of the Swiss government are delivered through the year by the minister in charge and present the upcoming legislative intent of the government. Despite some cross-national differences in speeches format⁴, these executive statements all reflect how and to which issues executive dedicate attention for the coming year. As such, the CAP executive datasets constitute a reliable comparative measure of the policy issues that government choose to politically emphasize and give priorities to (Bevan and Jennings

³ The five datasets were built up following the same master codebook of the CAP Project, Each sentence or quasi-sentence was classified according to the CAP-policy classification, with the exception of Switzerland for which the topic of the messages was used the coding unit. Using these codebooks, agendas were cross-coded by two independent coders and satisfied a high level of intercoder reliability (Jennings et al. 2011).

⁴ Speeches vary regarding ceremonial and symbolic statements across countries as well as regarding the overall size, the UK executive statements being more concise than the Dutch ones for instance (see discussion in Breeman et al. 2009 and Jennings et al. 2011).

2014; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Bevan et al. 2011; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Jennings et al. 2011; Mortensen et al. 2011). When issues promoting gender equality are mentioned in the speeches, it means that governments have decided to pay serious attention to them at that particular time and include them in their in set of priorities that they want to publicize (Kingdon 1995; Green-Pedersen 2007). Taking into account the considerable number of competing issues to which the government has to dedicate some of its limited capacity of attention, appearances of gender equality issues in executive speeches constitute as such hard cases of gendering executive attention.

Operationalizing the Profile of Gender Equality Issue Attention

To assess how and under what conditions patterns of attention toward gender equality vary across policy domains, we distinguish between two main types of gender equality issues: class based and status based issues (Htun and Weldon 2010; Mazur 2002). Class based issues are mainly redistributive and aim at promoting women's economic independence and a better gender balance between work and care activities. We operationalize two dependent variables addressing class based issues. The first one covers all the mentions in the speeches that address the promotion of women's economic independence such as measures regarding women's access to the workforce, education, vocational training and workforce development as well the eradication of gender discrimination at work and in pension schemes, unemployment benefits and taxation ("*labor and pension*"). The second one addresses class based issues targeting the improvement of gender balance between work and care activities through the development of childcare program and maternity / paternity / parental leave ("*childcare and leave*"). The second type of gender equality issues addresses the subordinate status of women in the society and the social gender roles. In this article, the first dependent variable measuring such status related issues covers executive attention toward reproductive rights, violence against women and same-sex couple rights ("*reproduction and violence*"). The second status related dependent variable captures the speech

mentions regarding blueprint policies which address the promotion of gender equality as an overarching social project (“*blueprint*”).

The promotion of gender equality is relatively limited over time and gender equality does not constitute a core issue in any of the agendas that are included in this study. When any type of gender equality issues is eventually mentioned, it is mostly mentioned only once per speech. We have therefore decided to build up a pooled binary time-series cross-sectional (BTSCS; Beck and Katz 1995; Beck 2001) dependent variable including the five countries over 46 years for Denmark, 47 years for Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and 26 years for Spain, that is 213 country-year observations where each observation represents one country at one year.⁵ The four dependent variables are coded 1 in a given year if the promotion of gender equality in their respective domain is mentioned at least once in the speeches, and 0 otherwise.

Operationalizing the Determinants of Gender Political Attention

Women in power – The first explanation emphasizes on the positive impact of some increasing women’s representation in politics on political attention regarding gender issues. To measure women’s representation in parliament, we use the percentage of

⁵ The Danish Prime Minister speech for the year 1971 has been excluded from the analysis. Parliamentary elections took place a couple of weeks before this speech, which was pronounced by the former Prime Minister heading the care-taker government until the new government coalition was formed. As the 1971 elections led to a drastic change in the party composition of the government, we cannot assume that the speech reflect the policy priorities and intents of either the new government or the old one. Accordingly, we have excluded this observation.

parliamentary seats occupied by female MPs in the lower or single House at the time when the speech was delivered (Inter-Parliamentary Union database, 2009). For their representation in government, female ministerial participation was computed as the percentage of female ministers (with or without portfolio) within a cabinet at the time of the speech.⁶ Finally, the effect of women's policy agency is captured through a binary variable stating whether an executive body or women's minister portfolio formally existed at the time of the governmental address (1) or not (0).⁷ As the women's policy agency literature emphasizes that the presence of women in government is strengthened

⁶ While the increase in women MPs is more or less linear over time, the feminization of cabinets has followed a somewhat bumpier path. To control for this potential non-linearity and time effect, we tested out a series of models with the square term of women's share of portfolio. The models did not present any significant difference regarding the impact of this variable. In the UK we do not take into account members who attend cabinet only when issues regarding their portfolio are discussed as they are not full members of cabinet and do not have access to the networks and resources required to achieve support for their portfolios (Annesley and Gains, 2010). Sources: CH: www.admin.ch/t DK: DK: Folketinget (2007) "Regeringer" at www.ft.dk; NL: www.rijksoverheid.nl; UK: Dod's Parliamentary Companion; Butler and Butler, 2000; Cabinet Office Press Releases; ES: ParlGov Dataset, Döring and Manow (2012).

⁷ These bodies take the form of a secretary of state on emancipation in the Netherlands, junior minister for equality in the UK, minister for gender equality in Denmark and Spain and federal office for gender equality in Switzerland. Sources : CH : Engeli (forthcoming) ; DK : DK: www.ft.dk; NL: Lauwers (2007); Outshoorn (1995); UK: Annesley and Gains (2012); ES: authors.

in case of strong women's policy machinery to support their policy action, an interaction term is added for the interaction between the number of women in government and the existence of women's policy agency.

Party Ideology — The second explanation draws on party competition dynamics and highlights the differentiated capacity of the Social Democrats to integrate the whole spectrum of gender equality issues into their ideology. To capture the political strength of the Social Democrats, we use the percentage of Social Democratic seats in the lower or single House at the time when the speech was delivered (Armingeon et al. 2012).⁸

Economic Performance — The third explanation stresses the differentiated impact of economic performance across types of gender equality. To estimate the effect of macroeconomic conditions, we include two key indicators that cover the whole time period and this for the five countries: the annual percentage change in growth of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the annual percentage change of unemployment rate

⁸ Cabinet shares held by Social Democrats is a common alternative measure used in the literature. Two main reasons have motivated our choice. First, the Social Democrats are systematically holding two seats (out of seven) in the Swiss permanent coalition cabinet. Relying on cabinet shares in the analysis would have resulted into artificial stability over time. Second, as Bonoli and Reber argue (2010), opposition can play an important role in multi-party systems in vetoing policy proposal from a weakened government and push for placing issues upon agenda. In an additional model excluding the Swiss observations, we substituted the cabinet share for the parliamentary seats share. As the results remained largely similar, we have opted for the parliamentary seats share in order to allow for as much variation as possible regarding the Swiss observations.

(Armingeon et al. 2012). As policy intent appearing on governmental agendas tends to reflect argumentation within the executive taking place during the preceding months, the two economic indicators are lagged by one year in order to better reflect the speed with which economic performance are generally taken into account in setting governmental priorities for the following years.

Finally, we added a number of control variables to the models. To control for vote-seeking strategy that would incite political parties to dedicate attention to gender equality to gain female votes, we included a dichotomous variable controlling for parliamentary elections year (Armingeon et al. 2012). Second, we include a dichotomous variable measuring whether the country has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Eliminations of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) at the time of the governmental speech was delivered. CEDAW is the only binding treaty that all the countries ratified but there is variation in the time of ratification. We include this control for the range of gender equality issues that are covered by CEDAW: blueprint issues, class based issues regarding discrimination at work, in pension, unemployment and other labor market-related benefits. Lastly, to control for time dependence, i.e. when the occurrence of an event may increase the likelihood of subsequent events, we include cubic polynomial of time in the models (Carter and Signorino 2010) and run pooled binomial logit model with estimated jackknifed standard errors (Efron and Tibshirani 1994; Kittel and Winner 2005).⁹

⁹ Carter and Signorino (2010) demonstrate that the use of a cubic polynomial of time performs as well as the natural cubic splines developed by Beck et al. 1998. As our aim is

RESULTS

Our first explanation draws on the argument that increasing women's representation in politics positively impacts on political attention regarding gender equality issues, gendering policy debates and promoting women-friendly policy outcomes. The gender and politics literature debates the potential of parliamentary representation, the activity of 'critical actors' in government or the administrative dedication of women's policy agencies to achieve executive attention for gender equality issues. As Table 1 reveals, there are actually several mechanisms through which women's representation impacts on gendering executive attention and these mechanisms greatly vary across types of gender issues. Neither women's access to the parliament nor to the government exert any systematic positive impact across policy domains. When women's influence matters, it does so through different channels.

A higher representation of women in parliament only encourages governments to add to some specific class based policies to their agenda: the issues addressing women's access to the labor market and the removal of discrimination in pensions. To the contrary, the steady increase in women MPs does not seem to present any incentive for government to pay more attention to the gender imbalance between care and work activities. Issues such as paternal leave and childcare require costly policy action that women's lobbying may not always achieve. In addition, while the first wave of women accessing Parliament was greatly supported by the faster feminization of left wing parties, recent trend presents

to control for time, we do not have any expectation regarding the significance and direction of these coefficients. In order to save space, we do not report them in table 1.

more diversity in the political affiliation of women MPs. Women from center/right wing parties might be less favorable in promoting costly change in gender roles such as offering some father's leave than in supporting women's engagement with paid work by introducing work flexibility measures for instance.

The results regarding status based issues such as blueprint policies and issues related to reproduction and gender violence point out another mechanism that has been so far neglected in the literature: the impact of women in government holding ministerial positions. A higher representation of women in government seem to be more decisive for getting status based issues upon the agenda than an increased critical mass in Parliament. This result is very much in line with Childs and Krook's argument on 'critical actors' (2008). Status issues are often polarizing such as abortion or same sex marriage or imply, such as gender violence, long process ahead of policy action to eventually solve the issue. The (still) relatively few critical actors in cabinet turn out to be more effective on status based issues because of their dedication and/or specialization than a greater number of MPs who do not necessarily position gender equality on top of their legislative priorities.

Finally, the presence of a women's policy agency does not seem to impact much for securing executive attention for gender equality. The effect, as well as the interaction term (women in government supported by a policy agency), prove to be non-significant for the four policy domains. The existence of a women's executive unit is not sufficient to guarantee a greater executive attention toward gender equality. Here as well, it seems that any impact of a women's policy agency would depends rather depends on its

willingness and resources capacity to act in favour of women than on its single existence (McBride and Mazur 2012).¹⁰

Insert table 1 about here

Our second explanation relies on political ideology and social democratic politics. We formulate the hypothesis that the impact of strong Social Democrats on the promotion of gender equality will vary across policy domains. Our findings confirm this expectation of variability in Social Democrats' impact. A strong presence of Social Democrats in the parliament does not constitute any back bench opportunity for pushing gender issues related to status policies onto executive agendas. There is no significant statistical relationship between the presence of a high number of Social Democratic MPs and the likelihood of gendering executive attention towards status based issues. Being mostly symbolic, blueprint issues have often rallied wide ranging support cutting across political affiliations while gender equality issues related to doctrinal positions such as abortion, same-sex marriage or gender violence has proven to be supported by a diversity of political coalitions across countries (Engeli et al. 2012). Social Democrats do not have any ideological monopoly on women's status issues. For instance, Social Democrats were often reluctant to self-profiling on abortion in many Western European countries (Engeli

¹⁰ Interaction effects are more complicated to handle and less directly interpretable in non-linear models. We conducted some further analysis of the potential interaction between women's agency and women's representation in the executive across various values of the predictor variables to better assess the robustness (Norton et al. 2004). The effect proves to be non-significant across nearly all predicted values.

2009) while Liberal parties have shown to be strong supporter of same-sex marriage in other countries (Engeli et al. 2012).

Our theoretical expectation stresses a greater Social Democratic role in promoting class based gender equality issues. Our finding is more nuanced. A strong presence of Social Democrats proves to be a decisive factor for getting attention towards women's economic integration on the labor market and independence in pension and welfare benefits. This result is not surprising; issues regarding employment and welfare benefits constitute core issues of the Social Democratic agendas regardless of the gender equality aspect. Their high profile of these issues in the partisan mainstream agenda may increase their likelihood of being gendered in the parliament. On the contrary, a presence of Social Democrats does not seem to matter much for pushing issues regarding childcare and parental leave. The issues are mainly framed as purely 'gender issues' and may not benefit from the overall high attention of Social Democrats regarding the welfare state.

Our last explanation relates to economic performance. Policies regarding the improvement of women's status and overarching blueprint equality that state the broad principle of gender equality can be regarded as a cost neutral advancement in gender equality policy. On the contrary, the development of childcare programmes and parental leave, the promotion of women's access to the labor market and the removal of discrimination in pension scheme have important redistributive consequences and may require important budget resources. Accordingly, we expect that economic performance will exert a strong impact on the likelihood of getting executive attention toward class based policies while such an effect should not occur status related policies.

Our results confirm our expectations. It is easier to get gender equality policies carrying significant economic consequences onto the policy agenda when the economy is performing well. While decreasing unemployment does not exert any significant impact, a rise in GDP growth appears to enable attention to the improvement of women's access in the labor market as well as the development of childcare support and parental leaves.

This finding suggests support for the expectation that gender equality advocates and executive actors are more likely to succeed in pressing for potentially costly and redistributive measures and less likely to face resistance and cognitive friction when the economic climate is perceived to be good. That the relationship is not found in relation to decreasing unemployment may reflect that some measures to tackle sex inequality in the labor market flow from executive concern to increase labor market participation when unemployment is high rather than flowing from political representation.

Finally, a last effect deserves some attention. To control for the influence of international norms on national patterns in promoting gender equality, we have included a dichotomous variable measuring whether the country has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Our results reveals some negative effects related to CEDAW ratification on measures addressing employment and pension issues as well as blueprint policies. Indeed, the ratification of the CEDAW required the amendment of a series of laws that contained discrimination on the base of gender, prior to ratification of the convention.

CONCLUSION

Our article shows that gender equality issues are not a homogeneous set of issues and they do not respond to the same issue determinants. By distinguishing between different sets of class and status based issues we are able to demonstrate that the mechanisms through which gender equality issues gain advocacy and reach governmental agendas differs by gender equality policy domain.

Class based gender equality issues which address the economic independence of women and gendered division of paid and unpaid work carry important financial consequences for the state, the employers and employees. Our analysis shows that their costly character makes them more likely to get political attention when the economy is performing well.

In addition, a strong presence of Social Democrats proves to be decisive for gendering government agenda regarding measures to improve women's economic independence but does not constitute any strong potential for advocacy in favour of gender balance between care and work activities. Similarly, the strengthened presence of female MPs seem to strongly incentivize government to dedicate more attention to class based gender equality issues related to women's integration in the labor market only.

Executive attention towards policies addressing the status of women and proclaiming the general principle of gender equality seems to follow a different pattern. As expected economic conditions do not play any role; the less costly nature of these policies protects them from any change in national economic performance. Party politics do not seem to exert an impact either. Blueprint policies stating the general principle of gender equality do not get more attention from the left than from the right. The same goes for issues regarding reproduction, same-sex marriage and domestic violence. None of these issues are part of the class political cleavage and do not tend to be sensitive to any variation in the power configuration of political forces. Finally, regarding the impact of women's presence in politics, the path to executive attention for status policies seems to diverge from the class based policies path as well. Women's representation in parliament seems to matter less than an increasing representation of women in government. Here, the promotion of status related gender equality issues and overarching blueprint equality seems not to rely on a mass of females MPs but rather on the presence of (a few) women in the concerned ministries empowered to advocate policy reform.

These findings make a series of contributions to policy agendas research as well as gender and politics scholarship. Our study adds a gender dimension to the policy agendas scholarship and in so doing adds depth to the understanding of how new, rather than established 'core', issues secure a place on already full governmental agendas. We offer a clear example of variability in when executive attention is achieved which reflects very different constellations of political representation, friction and veto points. Our findings

confirm the need to differentiate policy according to the representation and resources required to implement it.

Our research also makes a theoretical and empirical contribution to gender and politics scholarship by offering detailed analysis of the determinants of gender equality at the crucial agenda setting stage of the policy making cycle. By focusing on how to secure governmental attention for gender equality issues, we make a major contribution to understanding the differential genesis of gender equality policy dynamics.

For gender and politics scholarship we support and reinforce the conception of gender equality as a multidimensional set of issues. Our research confirms the value and need for a multidimensional understanding of gender equality. This has significant implications for advocates of gender equality in understanding the circumstances under which their issues may or may not be taken up by the government of the day. In particular, the strength of our finding in relation to economic performance warrants further attention from gender and politics scholarship.

Our study demonstrates that there is not singular explanation for how to secure governments' attention to gender equality, which highlights the need for more comparative research into the determinants of gender equality across domains. Further, we make a methodological contribution by addressing our research questions using the CAP data base and with quantitative methods. This reveals clear patterns and dynamics which can be investigated in more detail through qualitative case study methods. Whilst confirming these domain sensitive aspects of the profile of gender equality policy change, the research leaves, however, a puzzle regarding the effect of temporality: to what extent are there domain sensitive patterns in the *pace* of policy change? Further work is required to investigate the timing of issue attention and policy change both within and across gender equality domains.

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